

What is claimed is:

1 1. A method for generalized Common Gateway Interface (CGI) processing,
2 comprising:
3 (a) providing a plurality of distinct CGI forms on a server connected to a network;
4 (b) receiving a plurality of distinct user requests over said network; and
5 (c) responding to said requests by invoking a single, generalized CGI processing routine
6 for enabling user data corresponding to said plurality of distinct CGI forms to be entered.

1 2. The method of claim 1, said step (c) comprising:
2 (d) generating a parameter file from a selected CGI form corresponding to a user request;
3 and
4 (e) presenting said selected CGI form on a display device, to collect user input data
5 corresponding to said selected CGI form.

1 3. The method of claim 2, said step (d) comprising extracting input field names from
2 said selected CGI form.

1 4. The method of claim 2, further comprising:
2 reading said user input data based on said parameter file; and
3 formatting said user input data for output to said user.

1 5. The method of claim 4, further comprising:
2 executing post-processing functions to perform additional specified operations on said user
3 input data;
4 generating an output file including formatted input data and results of said operations; and
5 reporting a result of said request back to said user.

1 6. The method of claim 5, wherein said post-processing functions include calculations
2 based on said user input and dispatching electronic mail transmitting said output file to a targeted
3 user.

1 7. A system comprising:
2 a network for transmitting a plurality of user requests to a server;
3 a server linked to said network, said server comprising:
4 a plurality of distinct CGI forms corresponding to said requests; and
5 generalized handling means for handling each of said plurality of distinct
6 CGI forms in response to said requests.

1 8. The system of claim 7, said generalized handling means comprising single initial
2 data-gathering means for generating a plurality of distinct parameter files from said plurality of
3 distinct CGI forms.

1 9. The system of claim 8, said generalized handling means further comprising single
2 action means for processing said parameter files and performing user-specified operations
3 corresponding thereto.

1 10. The system of claim 9, said initial data-gathering means further comprising:
2 means for retrieving said distinct CGI forms from said server in response to said requests;
3 and
4 means for presenting said distinct CGI forms to a user and accepting corresponding user
5 input data.

1 11. The system of claim 10, said action means further comprising:
2 means for reading said user input data based on said parameter files;
3 means for formatting said user input data;
4 means for calling post-processing functions to perform additional specified operations on
5 said user input data;
6 means for generating an output file including formatted input data and results of said
7 operations; and
8 means for reporting a result of a request back to a user.

1 12. The system of claim 11, wherein said post-processing functions include calculations
2 based on said user input and dispatching electronic mail transmitting said output file to a targeted
3 user.

1 13. In a network linking issuers of requests to a server comprising a plurality of distinct
2 CGI forms, a method comprising:

3 (a) in response to a first request, retrieving a first CGI form from said server and
4 presenting said first CGI form to an issuer of said first request;

5 (b) accepting first input data based on said first CGI form and sending said first input data
6 to said server;

7 (c) in response to a second request, retrieving a second CGI form different from said first
8 CGI form from said server, and presenting said second CGI form to an issuer of said second
9 request;

10 (d) accepting second input data based on said second CGI form and sending said second
11 input data to said server; and

12 (e) using a single CGI form handling program of said server for processing both said first
13 and second CGI forms and first and second input data.

1 14. The method of claim 13, said step (e) comprising:

2 executing the same initial data gathering routine for each of said first and second requests,
3 said initial data gathering routine comprising the steps of:

4 parsing input fields in the corresponding CGI form to generate a parameter file;

5 displaying the corresponding CGI form on a display device; and

6 generating a submitted CGI form by recording inputs to said corresponding CGI form via
7 said display device.

1 15. The method of claim 14, said step (e) further comprising:

2 following said initial data gathering routine, executing the same data processing routine for
3 each of said first and second requests, said data processing routine comprising the steps of:

4 (f) reading said parameter file to determine which fields of said submitted CGI form to
5 process;

- (g) formatting data in fields determined according to step (f); and
- (h) returning a result of said request to an issuer of said request.

16. The method of claim 15, further comprising:
executing a post-processing program, said post-processing program performing operations on said inputs; and
sending an output file generated by said post-processing program to an electronic mail address of a target recipient.

17. A computer program product tangibly embodied on a computer-usable medium, said computer program product comprising computer-executable instructions which when executed implement a process comprising:
(a) providing a plurality of distinct CGI forms on a server connected to a network;
(b) receiving a plurality of distinct user requests over said network; and
(c) responding to said requests by invoking a single, generalized CGI processing routine for enabling user data corresponding to said plurality of distinct CGI forms to be entered.

18. The program product of claim 17, said step (c) comprising:
(d) generating a parameter file from a selected CGI form corresponding to a user request;
and
(e) presenting said selected CGI form on a display device, to collect user input data corresponding to said selected CGI form.

19. The program product of claim 18, further comprising:
executing post-processing functions to perform additional specified operations on said user input data;
generating an output file including formatted input data and results of said operations; and
reporting a result of said request back to said user.

1 20. The program product of claim 19, wherein said post-processing functions include
2 calculations based on said user input and dispatching electronic mail transmitting said output file to
3 a targeted user.

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